

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

Vol. 29 No. 7

July 15, 1961

Whole No. 346



DIME NOVEL SKETCHES #25

ADVENTURE WEEKLY

One of the many short-lived colored covered weeklies Street & Smith published at the turn of the century. This one lasted 19 issues Dec. 25, 1897 to April 30, 1898. Size 7x10½, 32 pages. Phil and Ralph, heroes of the Civil War weekly, Red, White and Blue are now united and fighting in the Boxer Rebellion.

TED STRONG AND HIS ROUGH RIDERS

By J. Edward Leithead

(continued from last issue)

From #38 to 73, the Young Rough Riders were away from the Black Mountain Ranch a great deal, adventuring in other parts of the West. In #74, Ted Strong's Luck, or, The Deed to Moon Valley, the Black Mountain herd is thrown on the trail to seek better pasture and water. After a long drive it comes to Moon Valley, meeting the violent opposition of one Bill Jeskit, who doesn't want anyone else in the territory. Ted befriends White Bull, the Indian owner of Moon Valley, who eventually gives the Rough Riders a lifelong lease on the fine grazing there. From that point onward in the series, much of the action takes place at Moon Valley Ranch, new home of the Rough Riders.

It became a much larger ranch than the old Black Mountain, Ted hiring a crew of cowpunchers to look after the stock in addition to the original Rough Rider outfit. He and Bud and the other regulars, while fighting to clean up a cowtown on the railroad near Moon Valley—named Strongburg in Ted's honor—were appointed deputy United States marshals, and through all the remaining stories they retained these deputy marshalships.

You can see, from the outline given of the Rough Riders' activities, that much of the stuff was similar to the basic plots a little later by writers of cowboy stories (myself one of them) that deluged the newsstands for better than thirty years (and has it really abated, with so many pocket Westerns still being published?). But in the days of Rough Rider Weekly range wars, cattle and sheep or water rights, trail driving, sodbuster vs. cowman, the agate-eyed two-gun man, the grass-greedy cattle baron, etc. were not so common in fiction as they are today.

Now, who was it picked up the lives of the Rough Riders after St. George Rathborne switched his talents almost entirely, for the time being, to the Buffalo Bill Stories? That would include stories from #38 to #76, as far as we've gone. According to copyright dates given me, William Wallace Cook didn't write any Rough Riders until 1906, and these stories in question were published in 1905. At that time Cook was supposedly busy with Diamond Dick stories. George C. Jenks, who took over the Diamond Dick, Jr., Weekly from him, didn't start work on it before late 1905 or early 1906. Would Cook, in 1905, in

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addition to his Diamond Dick stuff, have found time to knock out some 38 Rough Riders? I think he could have, for he was a prolific writer (remember the book-length novels he produced aside from his routine novels for the weeklies), but whether he did or not, I can't be sure. The stories are the kind he would write, and even above #76 they seem to bear his mark as surely as any publisher's imprint.

#77 was Ted Strong's Wild West Show, or, The Making of an Indian Chief, the show put on to celebrate the elevation of a college-bred Indian, Braveheart, to the chieftancy of his renegade father's clan, and also advertise Moon Valley Ranch to outsiders. This number contains a fine description of an old-time rodeo and frontier day exhibition—Cook, I'll bet you! Bud Morgan was in his glory with a lot of old saddlemates from all over the West, who had come to take part. They were not all fictitious characters as this excerpt will prove, although the story was published Oct. 7, 1905, and many other rodeo stars have risen to prominence since then:

"Gabe Martin and Ollie Kirtley promised to come up from the 101 Ranch in Oklahoma, George Elser, the champion trick rider said he would be there, and so did Charlie Williams, the champion roper of Texas; to say nothing of Bill Pickett, the Negro cowboy, who said he would throw any longhorn Texas steer with his teeth. Hundreds of letters were received from the cleverest cowpunchers and riders of bucking horses in the West, accepting the invitation of the young rough riders, until it looked as if all the cow talent in the country would be there in friendly contest."

#79 was Ted Strong, King of the Wild West, or, Winning a Town by a Ride (the story of the fight for Strongburg), and thereafter the titles always began with "King of the Wild West." Since the hero of Toussay's Wild West Weekly, Young Wild West, was such a success, possibly Street & Smith thought that giving the hero of Rough Rider Weekly a

title with the magic phrase "Wild West" in it would help circulation. The stories, and, by this time, the covers were so uniformly good, it would seem that nothing more was needed to make "The Best Wild West Stories Published" (as blazoned on the Rough Rider masthead) very popular.

Besides running the Moon Valley Ranch, the Rough Riders found time to round-up camels turned loose in the desert after Uncle Sam's unsuccessful attempt to use them for the Army in #80, King of the Wild West's Camel Hunt, or, The Young Rough Riders in the Mojave Desert; to hunt down wolves preying on cattle in Montana in #83, King of the Wild West's "Bounties," or, The Young Wolf Hunters of Montana; to seek treasure on land, #86, King of the Wild West's Human Map, or, The Treasure of the Magic Cave Trail (startling cover picture by M. Russell of huge blind serpents guarding the treasure—they can't see Ted, revolver in hand, but they can smell him); and treasure under the sea, #94, King of the Wild West's Submarine, or, The Search for Sunken Treasure; to find a lost city in the mountains of Colorado, #89, King of the Wild West's Strange Quest, or, The Lost City of the Sangre de Christo (one of Cook's favorite themes, what more proof needed of his authorship?); to fight a range war in #91, King of the Wild West's Justice, or, The Sheep War of the Rio Las Animas. Rustlers, horse thieves, bad men, bank and train robbers were meat for the Rough Riders—take your choice: #95, King of the Wild West's Finish, or, The Great Stone Door, #98, King of the Wild West's Horsethief, or, The Enigma of Lost Springs, #105, King of the Wild West's Posse, or, Stella's Own Vigilance Committee.

Stella Fosdick! In #102, King of the Wild West's Haunt, or, Stella's Escape from Sacrifice, this range-raised daughter of Col. Philip Fosdick, owner of the Sierra Blanca Ranch, near El Paso, Texas, enters the scene. "Widely known in Texas as 'Queen of the Range'", Stella is

suddenly left an orphan (later in the series she sells her father's ranch, disposing of most of the cattle to the Rough Riders to stock the Moon Valley Ranch, South Dakota).

Legally, Stella's guardian was her uncle, Walter Graham, a Colorado sheep rancher (owner of the Los Gatos Ranch), but the Rough Riders adopted her—she was their girl pard. She went everywhere they did, dragging along her aunt as companion (well, then, chaperon). Mrs. Graham didn't always want to go, but Stella wouldn't be refused.

Stella Fosdick was to Rough Rider Weekly what Arietta Murdock was to Wild West Weekly, one of its foremost characters, who got her name on the cover in every subtitle from #104 (and once before that, in #102) to the end. Stella and Arietta were the outstanding heroines of Western nickel novels. And the various Street & Smith artists, particularly Marmaduke Russell, saw to it that Stella was an eye-filler. She was the only member of Strong's Rough Riders who didn't wear khaki. With blonde hair cascading on her shoulders, topped off with a high-crowned white Stetson, bolero jacket, red skirt and white leggings—and a gun on her hip—Stella was a honey and appeared as regularly as Ted on the covers above #100. It was William Wallace Cook, apparently, who created this charming girl range rider, but Harry St. George Rathborne is about to show up and write more Rough Riders.

#106, King of the Wild West Underground, or, Stella to the Rescue is Rathborne's, a story with a circus background. The show visits a small town, Shasta, California, where circuses do not spread their canvas too often. Gaudy posters announce: "Greatest Three Ring Circus in the World," "Most Stupendous Aggregation of Talent and Daring Ever Gathered Under Canvas," "Shasta Sam and His Seven Tame Lions." If any circus was ever headed for trouble, it was this one—"Shasta Sam, the owner of the circus, the man who was billed to appear as a lion-tamer, was

formerly an inhabitant of Shasta. He had been accused of horse-stealing and of cheating at cards by the ranchers who rode in there when they had a shipment of cattle to make on the railroad. Those who knew him then said he had a wonderful power over dumb animals."

Here's proof that Rathborne is telling the tale; he refers on page 23 to a little man with "shifty eyes and a scar across his brow, named Sanders. He had been a member of the Roaring Bill gang of cattle rustlers, two years before, when Ted Strong first struck the Black Mountain country. He had fought against the young rough riders. His captain, Roaring Bill Reynolds, had the name of being at the head of the worst gang of rustlers in the West. He was reputed to be the best gun-fighter and craftiest man in the whole cattle country. He was now serving a term in jail. The young rough riders had captured him and the rest of his gang. Sanders had a narrow escape from capture and he remembered it."

St. George Rathborne had started the Rough Rider saga writing under the pen-name of "Ned Taylor." It was still being used. Quite a few issues later he revived other old friends and foes from the Black Mountain Ranch days; it was #153, King of the Wild West's Message from Afar, or, Stella's Whifewinged Couriers. The Rossiters, father and son, return—and so does Louise Rossiter, lovely as ever, though Rathborne had a slip of the memory, calling her Earl's sister—she was his cousin. Earl, once the bitter enemy of Ted, at first appears to have reformed, but soon shows the old cloven-hoof (he's involved in a mining scheme to swindle his own father) and in the end he has to flee to Brazil.

As an aid to realism, Author Rathborne has Louise say to Ted, meeting him after two years have passed, "I bought one of the books that are written about you, on the train, and it told all about your being at Moon Valley." She was referring, of course to Rough Rider Weekly itself. Carrier pigeons figure in this story,

bringing a message to Ted from Louise, describing the place where she is held captive. Was the lovely Stella resentful of the beautiful Louise because of the handsome Ted? Author Rathborne indicates the girls were the best of friends.

Would it surprise you to know that Nick Carter is also in this story, which might be called a star issue? Well, Nick was disguised as one Bill Hicks and investigating the funny business at the Spanish Mine. Carter appeared again in #156, King of the Wild West's Long Dry Drive, or, Stella on the Staked Plains (story by William Wallace Cook, cover by Marmaduke Russell and what a picture! Ted on his black horse Sultan, clutching Stella, who has been unhorsed, tearing madly ahead of an avalanche of cattle!). Nick was in one or two other Rough Rider tales, Ted returning the compliment by an appearance with Bud Morgan in Nick Carter Weekly.

Special mention should be made of Col. Fothergill and "Cow" Suggs, veteran cattlemen of Moon Valley, who were great boosters for Ted and his outfit. On one occasion the Rough Riders visited Col. Zack Miller at the famous Miller Bros. 101 Ranch in Oklahoma, #154, King of the Wild West Water-bound, or, Stella's Wild Night on the Cimarron, story by Cook, cover by Charles L. Wrenn, showing cattle milling badly in a swollen river (which means drowning unless the "mill" is broken up), and Ted and his boys jumping their horses off a bluff wall above the river to get at the spooked herd. A dandy, from the front cover to "The End". There is a good description of a beef issue at an Indian agency in #151, King of the Wild West at the Lone Tree, or, Stella Finds the Mother Lode, one of Cook's. Once Ted went to the Klondike, #100, King of the Wild West's Meteor, or, The Race for the Klondike Diamond, and became a dog-puncher instead of a cow-puncher, which is "sourdough" for driving a team of huskies. Cook again.

W. Bert Foster didn't join the Street & Smith writing staff until 1906, but that was in time to give him opportunity to write for Rough Rider. His first two were #119, King of the Wild West's Wild-Goose Band, or, Stella's Long Flight on Skis and #120, King of the Wild West's Galleon, or, Stella's Spanish Treasure. Very good, but he really hit his stride with his next four yarns, #124, King of the Wild West's Helping Hand, or, Stella, the Girl Range Rider, #125, King of the Wild West's Buckskin Guide, or, Stella at the Grand Round-up, and its sequel, #126, King of the Wild West's Strategy, or, Stella's Trick Pony ("Contrary" was the pony and she often rode it), #127, King of the Wild West's Tangled Trail, or, The Disappearance of Stella.

Foster was as good at writing straight cowboy stuff as he was stories of the Indian-fighting West. He hit the target three more times, #130, King of the Wild West's Broncho-busters, #151, King of the Wild West's Corral and #133, King of the Wild West's Night Wrangler, then he wasn't in evidence for 24 issues. Cook and Rathborne, with, I think, some help from John H. Whitson were meanwhile carrying on. A particularly good one of Cook's during this Foster-less period was #148, King of the Wild West's Lost Circle "S" Brand, or, Stella in No Man's Land—another fine cover by Marmaduke Russell, too. One of the characters in this story is "Little Dick Fosdick, whom Stella had adopted for a brother, and whose name was 'Scrub' when Ted took him in charge after his rescue from the haunted house in the suburbs of St. Louis at the time he was a homeless boy." This kid could get into more trouble! . . . and they bought him a Winchester to play with! The "S" in the Circle S brand stood for Stella's name.

I mentioned "some help from John H. Whitson." He probably wrote other Rough Riders, too, but what I particularly had in mind was the series of baseball yarns in Rough Rider Weekly during the summer of 1907.

The game was introduced at Moon Valley in #159, King of the Wild West's Bronco Ball Tossers, Ted's cowboy nine playing the ball clubs formed by other cattle outfits. The Rough Rider uniform wasn't so unsuitable for ball-playing, but the other nines even wore chaps, and imagine fielding or base-running in heavy angora chaps! There were four more of these baseball numbers, #164, King of the Wild West's Great Throw, #165, King of the Wild West's Unique Ball Team, #166, King of the Wild West's Enchanted Ball and #167, King of the Wild West's Fatal In-shoot.

Once the Rough Rider team played a Sioux Indian nine of Carlisle graduates. An another time—the "Unique Ball Team"—they played the game on horseback. Well, polo is one thing and baseball another. Of course, the author might have got the idea from a display in Buffalo Bill's Wild West show of that period, called "A Holiday at the TE Ranch," in which mounted cowboys knocked around a ball the size of a gas-inflated balloon by plunging their horses at it—football on horseback. At any rate, although cowboy nines weren't unpopular on Frank Merriwell's Wyoming ranch, as I recall, readers of Rough Rider hardly expected it in a straight "Wild West" story, and I don't think this baseball business did the weekly any good. It would have been better to run stories of rodeos, cowboy sports, something with a definitely Western flavor as in Rough Rider #77. I don't remember that Foster, Cook or Rathborne ever wrote baseball stories—that they might have if they tried—but John H. Whitson had had experience writing about athletics for his hero, Jack Lightfoot, of All-Sports Library, all 56 issues of which he had authored under the pseudonym "Maurice Stevens." So I am crediting him with these 5 Rough Riders, for he did SOME writing for that weekly.

In the spring of 1906, Street & Smith ran ads in the back pages of their 5-cent libraries offering a free set of six post cards, in color, of Ted

Strong and his Rough Riders, to "every boy who will write and tell us what he thinks of No. 102 of Rough Rider Weekly, entitled 'King of the Wild West's Haunt, etc.'" A similar ad was run at the same time, giving away a set of half a dozen colored post cards of Frank and Dick Merriwell and other Tip Top characters.

Oct. 1, 1906, the publishers opened a "Grand Letter Competition" for Rough Rider Weekly, which closed April 1st, 1907, when a second contest started. For the best letters, \$100 in gold was offered, \$20.00 being the first prize. The response to these competitions was large and enthusiastic, judging by the letters from all parts of the country, afterward printed in a "Chat Column" at the back of the weekly. And the wonder is that this really fine series didn't continue much longer than it did with, apparently, so many loyal supporters. A lot of them were also readers of Tip Top Weekly.

Meanwhile, Young Wild West and Arietta Murdock, Cheyenne Charlie, Jim Dart and Hop Wah were keeping Wild West Weekly circulation at an all-time high. In 1907-08-09 it was really a "big" of Tousey's Big Six. Nor am I trying to talk it down. I liked Wild and Arietta fine, as I said before. And the brilliant color covers of Wild West Weekly, they were good, good, good, week after week. That artist of Tousey's, what WAS his name! Another thing, in Young Wild West they stuck to Old West: cattle range, mining camp, old frontier forts, treasure hunts, cavalry and Indian fights, fighting rustlers, chasing horse thieves, rounding up road agents, trips to Buckhorn Ranch on the Rio Grande, owned by Wild.

W. Bert Foster came back strong in Rough Rider with #158, King of the Wild West's Shadow on the Wall, or, Stella and the Masked Men. He'd apparently been writing up a bunch, perhaps at the behest in a last ditch effort to save the weekly. Following #158 was the first baseball story, then four of Foster's, all dandies, #160, King of the Wild West's Still Hunt, #161, King of the Wild West's

Saddle Pard, #162, King of the Wild West and the Claim Jumpers and #163, King of the Wild West and the Timber Thieves. Four more baseball stories, then two very good all-Western ones by Cook, Ted's "Desert Trail" and Ted's "Blacksnake Brand," then a clear track for Foster's final six.

In #170, King of the Wild West's Cattle War, or, Stella's Bout With the Rival Ranchers, Foster has Ted buy a new ranch, the Two Bar, in Montana, where his presence is pure poison to a bad outfit that wanted the Two Bar. But the Rough Riders showed 'em! This yarn and the five following it—#171, King of the Wild West's Automatic "Bronk," #172, King of the Wild West's Winged Witch, #173, King of the Wild West and the Cattle Raiders, #174, King of the Wild West's Great Round-up and #175, King of the Wild West's Drag-net—wound up the series and were all top-notch yarns of the cattle country except #172, a desert story, with bandits and a kidnapping, Stella playing an unusual role. In the last number, Ted sells the Two Bar Ranch and the Rough Riders return to Moon Valley.

Maybe you'd like a roster of the Young Rough Rider "regulars," as created by Harry St. George Rathborne (excepting two of them) and lasting through the series: Ted and Stella and Bud; Ben Tremont, Kit Summers, Thaddeus Perkins, nicknamed "Beanpole," "Doc" Fenton, Carl Schwartz, Jack Slate, Josiah Durkin, Bob Martin, Clay Whipple.

Rough Rider Weekly itself never had any reprints, but the series from #1 to #155 was reprinted at intervals in New Medal Library, leaving out #33 to 37 and 152. I think I can understand the publishers dropping #33 through 37 in the reprinting, because all but #37 were of a non-Western type, the boys as crime-fighters in St. Louis, Chicago, etc., but #152, King of the Wild West's Fighting-machine, or, Stella on the Blazed Trail, by Cook, was definitely Western and a good one, and its omission is puzzling. The "fighting-

machine" was a bull-terrier called "Mike."

The first of the reprints in New Medal was #498, Ted Strong, Cowboy, by "Edward C. Taylor," published Jan. 12, 1909. It contained the first four numbers of Rough Rider Weekly, and the cover was by F. A. Carter and excellent. So were the covers of some others that followed: New Medal #504, Among the Cattle-men, cover by Edward Johnson, #510, Black Mountain Ranch, cover by Johnson, #516, With Rifle and Lasso, cover by Charles L. Wrenn, #522, Lost in the Desert, cover by Johnson, #529, Fighting the Rustlers, cover by Johnson, #544, The Rival Miners, cover by Wrenn. After that the covers weren't nearly as good. And in some of the books the Rough Riders were called the "Broncho Boys," though otherwise the stories were unchanged. After New Medal ceased publication, the same Rough Rider stories, #1 to #155 (again excluding #33 through 37 and #152), were reissued in the 15-cent book type Western Story Library, comprising a set of 43 numbers.

In 1927, Street & Smith issued Rough Rider Weekly #156 to #175 (which hadn't been reprinted before) in this Western Story Library, continuing the series with #44 and running it up to #70. George C. Jenks, of Diamond Dick Weekly fame, wrote some new stories for the library at this time. In #50, Ted Strong's Great Round-up, containing reprints of Rough Rider #174 and #175, Jenks filled in with a third new story to complete the volume. Probably he authored all the stories from #51 to #61; #62 reprinted Wild West Weekly #2, 3 and 4, Wild and his friends being metamorphosed into Ted and his friends. There may have been more Young Wild West stories used after that. At any rate, when the last reprint from Rough Rider Weekly had appeared in Western Story Library, the old "Rough Rider" flavor, the stuff that made Ted Strong "King of the Wild West," was lacking.

The End

NEWSY NEWS

by Ralph F. Cummings

161 Pleasant St., So. Grafton, Mass.

The Brattle Book Shop (George Gloss, owner) and other historic buildings on Cornhill and Brattle Streets are being considered for demolition for redevelopment purposes. This is progress???

Well, we have two very tough reports to make, and they are that James Wm. Martin of Sacramento, Calif., died some where around the last of March or before April 16th, as I sent him the Mart, and the letter came back marked Deceased, by the postmaster.

Bob Smeltzer, Vice President of Happy Hours Brotherhood and Dime Novel Roundup, and originator of the heading, Reckless Ralph's Dime Novel Roundup, that appeared Jan. 1st, 1931 after I had taken over Ralph P. Smith's Happy Hours Mag in June 1930. Bob died June 2nd, in his sleep, while Jim Martin was in his 50's, perhaps 54 or thereabouts, Bob was over 80. A number of times when I was down to Philadelphia to be with Uncle Billee Benners (no uncle to me, but wanted to be known as Uncle Billee), who was very sick, and other times, I spent the night with Bob. He was one very swell guy to know. I first knew Bob in about 1922, when either he or I sent a card wanting old nickel novels. It's been wonderful knowing Bob, and his family. We'll all miss him, as well as his friends at his old home stand as well.

He has had many articles in the Roundup, back along, all fine articles too, also in other papers as well. I remember the first time we had met each other, along in 1937 I believe it was, what a time we had, short and sweet, while it lasted. Bob pulled out a pint from some hidden corner, and we were going to make merry, you bet—but we didn't, not from the bottle any way, as I didn't drink, and besides I had a headache from the bus ride down there, also tummy ache too, anyway, Bob dug out some 7 Up and whatever we used of both bottles, I sure was cured in a hurry.

Bob couldn't do enough for me, and it hurts me that I couldn't do the things I would of liked to of done for him while he was alive, but I just couldn't do it.

Wherever Bob or Jim may be, we hope they are now at peace, and quiet and may God bless them both. Many's the time I wonder how things are like when we leave this good old world of ours, where we'll end up. Heaven must be a wonderful place.

Tony London of the Frank Merriwell's Enterprises, 133½ So. Linden Drive, Beverly Hills, Calif., is on the trail for human interest stories, correspondence or little known facts about Gilbert Patten. They are planning on enlarging Patten's autobiography so that it will become an interesting and informative work for publication. This much needed volume should include these parts.

Mr. and Mrs. Pete Scallo, of Norwood, Mass., both collectors, Pete a dyed in the wool novel collector, and his wife a doll collector, dropped in for a little visit May 15th.

I'm told that when Fred P. Pitzer died, that it was in the church he loved so well, on March 2, 1960

Fred was another mighty fine fellow, and he sure did love to get old newspapers with gags in them, as well as old circus ads.

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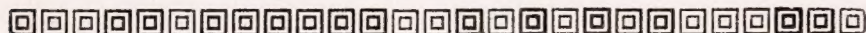
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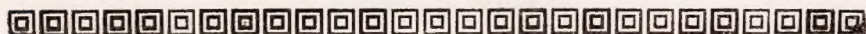
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